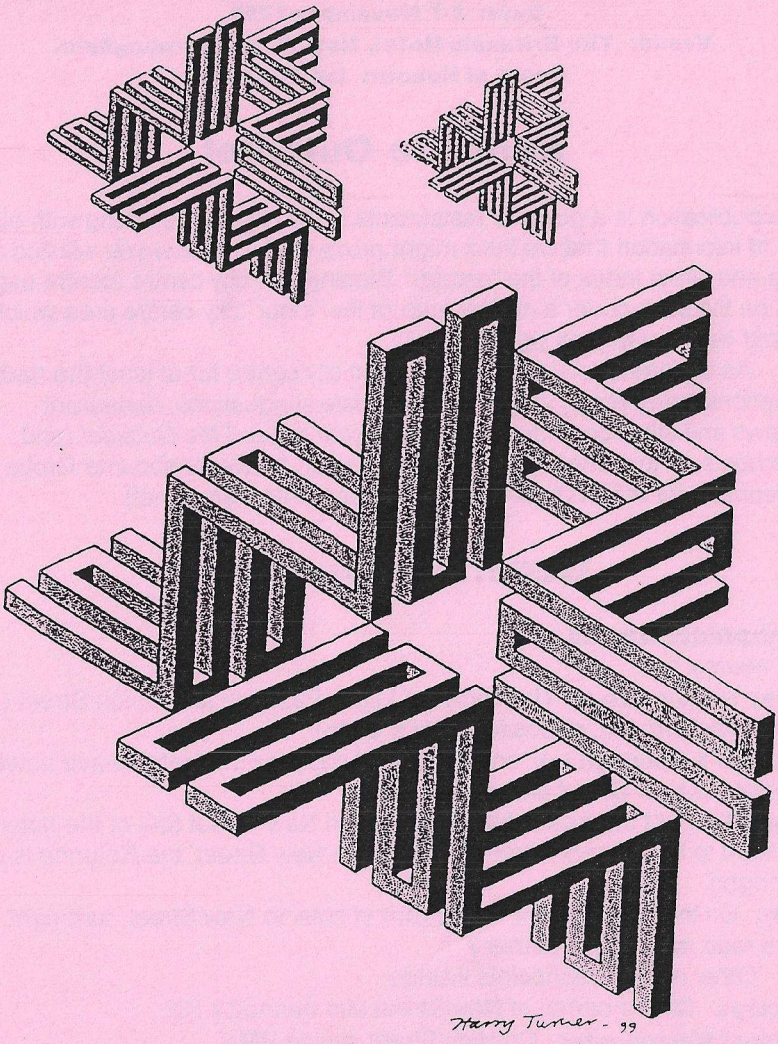
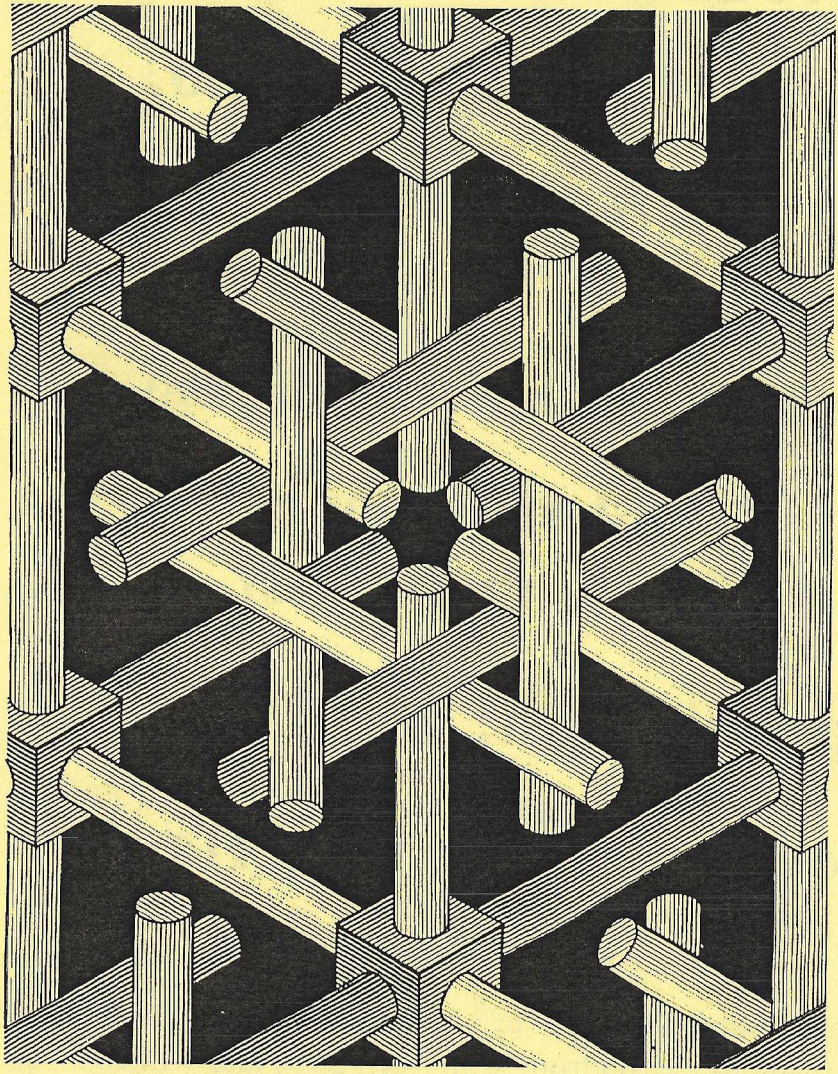
NOVACON 29



Read Me Outside!

NOVACON 29



Read Me Inside!

If you join Novacon 30 before 8th November it costs only £23.00!

Novacon 30,
at the Britannia Hotel,
New Street, Birmingham,
from 10th-12th November 2000

Guest of Honour: Christopher Priest

Special Guest: Rog Peyton

Guest Artist: David A. Hardy

Attending membership costs £23.00 until 8th November 1999, then £28.00, rising to £32.00 from 25th April 2000 and will cost £35.00 on the door. Join at the Novacon Registration desk at Novacon 29 or contact: Steve Lawson, Registrations, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ, England, e-mail xl5@zoom.co.uk, or check out our webpage at http://www.cooky.demon.co.uk/n30/n30.html

NOVACON 29

Date: 5-7 November 1999.
Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.
Guest of Honour: Ian Stewart.

Read Me Inside!

This publication gives you all the information we think you'll need whilst you are inside the Britannia; for information about Eating Out, cashpoints etc. please refer to your Read Me Outside!

The Programme
by Maureen Kincaid Speller

Please note that this programme may change slightly on the day. Events will be in the Gloucester Room on the 9th floor, except where indicated.

Friday

7pm **Opening Ceremony**

7.10-8pm **Where's the Science in Science Fiction?**
Given the number of books being published on everything from the physics of *Star Trek* to the philosophy of *Star Wars*, what is science fiction actually teaching us about science.
Ian Stewart, Dave Clements, Paul Kincaid. Moderator: Wendy Graham

8.15-9.30pm **It's The End of the World As We Know It**
It's Monday morning, you've checked out of the hotel and ... the world has ended. What do you do next? All knowledge is contained in fandom, so Pat McMurray, Liam Proven, Yvonne Rowse, Andy Sawyer assess their survival skills. Moderator: Vince Docherty.

9.30-10.30pm **ANDROMEDA BOOKS hosts a "Multi-Signing"**
featuring Brian Aldiss signing *White Mars* and *In the Twinkling of An Eye*, and many other authors...

10.30pm **People's Disco**
Bring your favourite tapes and cds and see if you can convince Nic Farey to play them...

Saturday

10am **Book Room opens in the Chiltern (2nd floor)**

11am-midday **The Science of Discworld**
Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen.

Midday-2pm **Book Auction**

2-3.30pm **Liar-to-Children and Speaker-to-Aliens**
Guest of Honour Speech - Ian Stewart
[Book room closed]

3.30-5pm **Quiz - Brum versus the World**
Chaired by quizmaster *sans pareil* Roger Robinson, two teams battle it out to establish world supremacy over science fiction and general knowledge.

5-6pm **Special Presentation: a representative from the Royal National Institute for the Blind will receive a cheque for the Talking Books Fund.**

Followed by:

Tanya Brown Julian Headlong and Mike Scott discuss some of the previous SF books chosen by fans to be made into talking books, and come up with some suggestions for future choices. Amongst the books discussed will be Greg Egan's *Permutation City*, Tanith Lee's *Don't Bite the Sun/Drinking Sapphire Wine* and

John Brunner's *Shockwave Rider*. Moderator: Maureen Kincaid Speller

6-7pm **Novacon debate - Wither the Nova Awards?**
Eve Harvey leads a discussion on the future of the Nova Awards along with Tommy Ferguson (whose criticism of the Awards is featured in the Programme Book) and current Nova Administrator Tony Berry. Your views count, so come along and give your opinions.

7-8pm **Fan Fund Auction**
The United Fan Funds want your money. Dig deep into your purses and wallets, and support GUFF, TAFF, the Foundation and other good causes. Can you resist the canned platypus?

9pm until late **Music from local Black Country group, Onyx, and James Henry's Disco.**

Sunday

10am **Book room opens in the Chiltern (2nd floor)**

11am **Encore, with added Eastern promise**
Ian Stewart reprises his highly entertaining talk on the filming of his Royal Institution Christmas lectures, with new material about the lectures' reconstruction in Japan. Will he produce a big cat from a suitcase? Come and see.

Midday-2pm **Art Auction**

2 pm-3.30pm **The Myths of Fandom**
Peter Weston, John Harvey and Steve Green reveal the shocking truth behind those stories about fandom in the Good Old Days.

3.30-5pm **Are there still Two Cultures?**
Marking the 40th anniversary of C. P. Snow's influential and controversial lecture on the Two Cultures (arts and sciences). Could science fiction could be seen as the

point at which the two cultures intersect. Our panellists discuss.
Ian Stewart, Amanda Baker, Ken McLeod, Caroline Mullan. Moderator: John Rickett

5pm **Awards Presentation**

7pm **Beer Tasting** (In the Stafford, 9th floor.)
The traditional Novacon beer-tasting. Sample unusual beers from around the world, and then sample them again, because you didn't believe it the first time.

Finally, we also have the Dave Lally Programme in the Severn Room (next door to Novacon Registration -- see the flip chart for details).

Food and Drink

Breakfast

Breakfast will be served in the restaurant on the 1st floor from 7.30am until 11.00am on Saturday and Sunday.

Convention Menu

This will be served in the 1st floor restaurant for every session (except Sunday 18.30-20.30 which will be served in the Warwick). Simply pay for your meal(s), collect your raffle ticket(s) and collect the meal(s) from the servery.

Hot Vegetarian and Hot Meat options will be available at each sitting, with a salad style option permanently available, along with a dessert. Each sitting will feature three of the following:

Steak & Mushroom Pie
Chilli Con Carne
Fish & Chips
Chicken Curry & Rice
Lasagne
Chicken & Apple Fricassee (with Chips & Peas)

Broccoli & Cream Cheese Bake
Vegetable Lasagne
Leek & Brie Pithvier
Pasta Bake
Baked Potatoes (Tuna, Sweet-corn, Baked Beans, Cheese, etc.)

Food will be served at the following times (in the 1st floor restaurant except where stated):

Friday: 17.00-19.00 and 21.00-22.00

Saturday: 12.30-14.30 and 19.30-22.30

Sunday: 12.30-14.30 and 18.30-20.30 (the latter in the Warwick)

Filled Baguettes will be available from both bars throughout the weekend priced £1.50 each.

Drink

We will not be using Harvey's as a bar - the main convention bar is the Malvern and Malvern Bar on the 2nd floor (please note that the smaller section, the Malvern "Bar" is a no smoking area). In addition, this year we will be using the Warwick bar on the 9th floor. Opening times are as follows:

Malvern/Malvern Bar: Friday and Saturday 11am to 2am and Sunday 11am to 7pm.

Warwick Bar: Friday 6pm-2am, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 2am.

The Real Ale we have arranged for the Britannia to supply for the weekend has been changed to Holdens Bitter (3.8%) which will cost £1.70 per pint. John Smith's Smooth Pour and Foster's lager will be sold at £1.50 per pint. Beamish Black is also available at £2.10 per pint. Unfortunately the hotel cannot do draught cider, but will sell bottled cider, both sweet and dry.

For the convenience of members who prefer wine the hotel have agreed to sell bottles (and some half bottles) over the two bars at restaurant prices! A full wine list should be available at the bar, but the following should give you some idea (prices per bottle except where stated):

1. House Red, £7.50
   Medium bodied (French) wine with a good depth of fruit
2. House White, £7.50
   Light crisp and fruity with a good balance

(Several other French wines but we won't be buying them will we?)

German Selection

3. Liebfraumilch QbA, £8.95
   A medium fruity wine with a pleasant floral bouquet
4. Neirsteiner Guites Domtal QbA, £9.25 (£4.40)

Flowery, scented bouquet with a crisp and fruity medium style

5. Piesporter Michelsburg QbA, £9.75 (half £4.65)
   A light and elegant wine with a crisp and fruity medium style

Australian Selection

6. Richmond Ridge White, £10.50
   Easy drinking Australian white wine, dry with a clean well balanced flavour
7. Richmond Ridge Red, £10.50
   Full flavoured red wine, good balance of fruit and character

Italian Selection

8. Frascati DOC, £9.75
   Medium bodied Italian wine with the scent of sunshine and almonds
9. Chianti DOC, £9.75
   Classic Italian Red, soft fruit with a spicy finish

South African Selection

10. Rocheburg Chenin Blanc, £9.20
    Medium dry white wine with a good balance of fruit

Champagne and Sparkling wines also available

Wheelchair Access by Pat McMurray

As you will have noticed the main entrance to the Britannia comprises a revolving door, leading to a small landing at the top of three stairs down to the ground floor reception. There is also a fire exit which can be opened from the inside, which leads to the same small landing. It appears possible to get an ordinary manual or powered wheelchair through the fire exit onto the landing. The hotel have a ramp for the three steps which they will lay down for the weekend. The fire exits are alarmed, but we'll ask them to switch the alarm off for the weekend. In the nature of things they will almost certainly forget to do these things, and switch the alarms on and take the ramp up at every shift changeover, but we shall do our best.

If you have a scooter or large trolley which cannot get through the fire exit, the revolving door can be completely folded back to allow very good access. I have been shown how to do this, and intend to train every gopher and anyone else who's interested in it, how to do it. The hotel have shown every sign of being helpful and friendly, but best to be prepared. I would

expect that the ramp will be down and the doors open most of Friday afternoon as the dealers come in and out as well.

The hotel has 11 floors -- ground floor reception, Mezzanine bar area, which we probably won't use, 1st floor restaurant which we will use, 2nd floor main con bar, dealer's room, Ops and registration, 8th floor meeting rooms, 9th floor artshow, smaller bar and programme room. All other floors are bedrooms and there are bedrooms on the 2nd and 8th floors as well.

There are three lifts to each floor -- two public lifts and one staff lift. There are also fire escape stairs between all floors and public stairs between the ground, mezzanine and first floors. Both public lifts and all public rooms appear both wheelchair and scooter accessible. We've calculated that it will take ten minutes for the entire membership to travel by lift from the second to the ninth floor -- we have fifteen minute intervals between most programme items. The staff lift can be used by the membership, but appears very difficult for wheelchair access -- I'd stick to the public lifts.

All the public areas on each floor are flat, with no stairs. Many of the doors are on springs and may prove difficult to open without assistance. Most entrances to public rooms are double doored and will be left open where possible. The artshow and dealers room appear large enough that they should not be crowded and manoeuvring should be reasonable.

The hotel has certain bedrooms they provide to people with access difficulties. None of them are fully accessible. All the bedroom doors are standard width, but they can remove the bathroom doors, if requested. I would suggest contacting the hotel in advance to make doubly sure they are aware of any potential difficulties. I believe wheelchairs will be able to get into the rooms, but I don't think scooters will be able to. It should be possible to get the hotel to take care of a scooter and recharge it overnight.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me, Pat McMurray, via the Novacon Registration Desk or catch me in the bar.

[Please note that if you wish to complain about the change of access to the Britannia through the closure of New Street correspondence should be addressed to: The City Centre Manager, City Centre Management, 6th Floor, Essex House, 27 Temple Street, Birmingham, B2 5DB. (Telephone 0121- 303-3004, Fax 0121-303-3332).

General Information

Novacon Table

The Novacon Registration table will be open:
Friday: 4pm-9pm for N29 Registrations ONLY.

Saturday: 10am-2pm and 3pm-7pm for all Novacon/BSFG business
Sunday: 10am-2pm for all Novacon/BSFG business
From Saturday morning onwards the table will be: selling a variety of Novacon merchandise and publications from previous Novacons; selling badges for the Beer Tasting (£4.50 per person or your 3 bottles of beer); selling memberships to Novacon 30 (just £23.00 at Novacon 29, rising to £28.00 after the con); raffle tickets in aid of the RNIB's Books for the Blind Project; taking money for the Birmingham SF Group's Beer & Skittles evening in December.

Dealers' Room

This is in the Chiltern on the 2nd floor and will be open from 10am until 6pm Saturday and 10am until 4pm on Sunday. It *may* be open at sometime on Friday. Times are subject to change.

The Art Show

This is in the Stafford on the 9th floor and will be open from 10am until 6pm on Saturday and on Sunday from10am until the Art Auction starts at noon.

The International Beer Tasting

On Sunday night from 8pm we will be hosting the latest in a long series of Novacon Beer Tastings, using the ever-popular BYOB (bring your own beer) format. To get the ball rolling the convention hopes to have two local beers on draught, Enville White (OG 1042, ABV 4%) and Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (OG 1058, ABV 6%), as well as a few interesting bottles - the rest is up to you!

To take part, all you need to do is bring at least THREE bottles of your favourite British or foreign beer to the convention and check them in at the Novacon Registration desk when you arrive. In return you will receive a "BEER BADGE" which will entitle you to drink the beer at the Tasting on Sunday.

Alternatively, you can also take part in the Tasting by buying a BEER BADGE for £4.50 from Novacon Registration.

All Novacon members are welcome to attend the Tasting. The convention is supplying an assortment of exotic and/or unusual non-alcoholic drinks at the Tasting, which will be free to everyone, but only those with BEER BADGES will be entitled to drink the beer. For further information contact the Beer Tasting Organiser, Tony Berry, in the bar, or ask at the Novacon Registration Table.

[Please remember, although we have come to an arrangement with the Britannia regarding the Beer Tasting, this does not extend to you bringing in your own supplies of drink elsewhere during the con.

The Hotel can and will charge corkage to people smuggling food or drink into the hotel!]

Gophers

If you ***have*** volunteered to be a gopher or if you ***wish*** to volunteer please report to CHRIS MURPHY in the Ops Room (the Lichfield, behind the Novacon Registration Desk). If you ***have*** volunteered or ***wish*** to volunteer to help in the Book Room please report to NIGEL FURLONG in the Chiltern.

R.N.I.B. Raffle

If you wish to purchase tickets for the annual raffle in aid of RNIB's Books for the Blind Project, Anne Woodford will be selling them around the con, but tickets will also be available from the Novacon Registration table -- Saturday onwards. In a change from established tradition, prizes will ***not*** be given out as the draw is made at the Award Ceremony. Instead prizes will be available for collection from a table set up in the Warwick bar ***after*** the ceremony. Last year the raffle raised just over £360 (which we rounded-up to £400), but this year we would like to make that £500.

We have a wide variety of prizes which will be displayed near the Novacon registration table from Saturday onwards. These include videos of Ian Stewart's Christmas Lectures (many thanks to Ian) and a wide variety of books (thanks to Transworld and Colin Greenland).

Badges

As non-convention hotel guests will be using the restaurant - for the table d'hôte menu you MUST wear your convention badges at all times in the public and convention areas of the Britannia. If you do not you may be refused service in the bars and refused food from the Convention Menu. You WILL be challenged by our own security staff and prevented from entering the function spaces. The hotel will challenge anyone in the hotel who is not wearing a badge.

As usual the badges are colour coded. Full members are cream, Friday members grey, Saturday members blue, Sunday members cream, Tech Ops and Gophers green, committee orange, Guest of Honour rose, beer badges grey.

Operations

As we are sure most of you are aware Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them! So if you are willing to help out at the convention -- anything from moving chairs to

helping with tech ops or working on the programme, please contact me, Chris Murphy, in the Ops Room.

Registration and Operations will be in the same place as last year, first on the left as you come out of the second floor lifts. Unlike last year we shall be operating a ~~fascist~~ 'tidy' Ops Room policy, with designated areas for stuff to be stored and no non-essential furniture (or people). However, you will still be able to leave coats and bags in Ops on request and **at your own risk.**

No Smoking

We would appreciate it if you refrained from smoking in designated "No Smoking" areas such as: the Chiltern/Dealers' Room (apart from dealers), the Stafford/Art Show, the Malvern Bar, and the Gloucester/Main Programme.

Dire Warnings

Please remember that the Britannia Hotel is in the business of selling accommodation, drink and food for profit. Neither the management of the Britannia nor the Novacon committee will approve of people "crashing" in rooms they haven't paid for, and/or smuggling food/drink into the hotel. The Novacon committee will obviously support the hotel in any dispute with members of Novacon caught "crashing" and/or "smuggling".

Have You Any Room?

We are looking for a new home for the Novacon art boards. If you have a spare room, garage or shed and think you can help please speak to TONY BERRY, or leave a message at the Novacon registration desk.

Novacon can arrange delivery immediately after this Novacon and will collect and return the boards for and after each subsequent Novacon. (One bonus of this is that if you have any gear you need to transport to and from Novacons the Novacon van can do this at the same time – and give you a lift as well!)

[This publication was produced by Martin Tudor for Novacon 29, November 1999, on behalf of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group (all rights revert to contributors on publication) and was printed by Critical Wave Publications, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX.]